

# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
October 3rd, 2016

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## **Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services Offers Tips to Reduce Flu Shot Anxiety**

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Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services (MMS CHS) is offering tips on reducing or preventing anxiety to get a flu shot instead of foregoing the vaccine altogether due to proven ineffectiveness of the Flu Mist.

“The announcement that the Flu Mist was not effective in preventing the flu should not deter anyone from getting vaccinated to protect against the flu virus.” says Allie Freidrichs, Director for MMS Community Health Services. “For those who are reluctant to get a flu shot because of what is called, “needle anxiety”, there are ways to overcome that reluctance and make getting a flu shot as easy and painless as possible.”

Ms. Freidrichs offers these suggestions to reducing anxiety associated with getting a flu shot:

- Educate and explain why a flu shot is important, and how it protects from contracting an illness that could become very serious
- Be honest about the fact that a flu shot may cause some brief pain, but acknowledge it’s a quick pinch and before a person has the time to say “ouch”, it will be over
- Don’t minimize a person’s fears; be sympathetic and help people manage their fear
- Bring a diversion or make a funny face to tell a silly joke
- Practice deep breaths, much like managing pain during labor
- Consider a treat or reward after the appointment
- Discuss options to reduce injection site pain with your health care provider. These may include topical anesthetics to temporarily numb the skin

Vaccination is especially important for children, adults 65 and older, pregnant women and people with asthma, diabetes and other long-term conditions who are at high risk from flu complications.

Most experts believe that flu viruses are spread most often by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

“Getting a flu shot is one of the most effective ways each of us can avoid getting the flu and spreading the illness to others,” states Freidrichs “With some planning and advice from your local health care provider, getting the flu shot can be relatively easy and pain and anxiety-free.”

Officials remind the public, in addition to getting the seasonal flu vaccine; there are other steps everyone can take to prevent contracting and spreading the flu. They include:

- If you aren't feeling well, stay home
- If your children are ill, keep them at home
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way
- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap, or use an alcohol-based sanitizer

The seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza (flu) viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The signs and symptoms of the seasonal flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. For more information about the seasonal flu or about vaccinations contact your local public health department at-

Meeker County Public Health: 320-693-5370

McLeod County Public Health: 320-864-3185

Sibley County Health and Human Services: 507-237-4000

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